11/1/71

Dear Howard,

Something on my mind impels me not to begin work until I discharge that responsibility, and I can't do it for a while. So I write to thank you for calling me Friday night, to tell you that thereafter I did speak to Jerry, and that he is deeply distrubed over something else which we will thrash out, among other things that we shall also go over, when he is here this coming weekend. Another couple had planned to come with him. I told him to tell them to come separately, another weekend, so that Jerry and I can speak openly and frankly. Since then I have decided to tape this as a matter of record.

At the moment I am disturbed by the chore I must complete. The psychiatrist to whom a conservative woman of some talent had been going, asked me to try and arrange for her to return to him (unpaid) when I asked him if she had what I was certain I detected in her painting, suicidal tendencies. She had sought me out for a different reason. He said my observation is correct, that she can be helped, etc., and that he will arrange for a period of hospitalization with her agreement. Well, he also told me to wait at least a week to see if she sought me out again, I got busy and forget about it, and a month went by. Last night, before supper, when I had taken Lil to visit a friend who had virtually no voice, it suddenly occurred to me that instead of sitting by with an inaudible conversation, I'd best do this. I was a bit shaken to find that this woman had almost killed herself the night before. I can get through to her, and she has agreed to phone the shrink this a.m. to make an appointment to see him. But I feel I must get him first, tell him what happened, etc., and what I think of her present state of mind. Can you imagine how I'd feel if she'd done herself in when I also feel that busy as I am I should have looked her up some time in the preceeding several weeks? Thus I find the time to write. No offense. He may be in his office beginning inabout 10 minutes.

One of the things that disturbs Ned, whose decency I do not question, as I do not question his intent, as he comprehends both (and this is not underwriting his subconscious, which I think has siezed him), is my handling of the Kennedy matter. You read this. It is one of the divisive questions in our thinning ranks. One the one hand we have disappointment and passion, perhaps with unrealized resentment or distaste over some of the more reprehensible things in Bobby's past, with McCarthy, the persecution of Hoffa, etc. On the other other what I regard as the realities of modern political life. I have never been a Bobby fan, still am not. It is not partisanship but what I see as both truth and reality, one of the means by which an evil end was deliberately accomplished, that I address, and I think if anything I understated. For example, could I not have teed off on Katzenbach and asked where the hell did he get off being silent when his boss was threatened with the painful blackmail of being called as a witness. A witness to what? The ripples in the pool at Hickory Hill? To Hoover's phone call? Why should he have been called on for any opinion of the Report by the Commission, if most of all when it hadn't been written, at any time? What none of us has done is put ourselves in his place. I think I have come closest. First there was the pain of the killing, something no worse for him than for other humans. What became intolerable is the public nature of the suffering. He couldn't even go to the casket without being on camera. Can you imagine the anguish of just being with Jackie and never a moment in private? Another element I think no one lese had addressed, and I think I did in the Epilogue to *WW* II is that had he had any influence on the investigation, there would always have lingered the question, did a vindictive spirit guide it. Aside from this, we know the facts, that LBJ immediately and permanently isolated him from it, and that busy as any man in his position was and had to be, what he knew came from secondary sources, not one of which was not parti pris, not in some way personally involved in the monster being created.

Anyway, there are other unpleasantness in the offing. I may have been responsible for one, without intending it. If so, then Cyril has been capable of and has done calculated mischief. One of the things Jerry fears is fiction. He fears my isolation from the "help" I have gotten from other critics. Save for his efforts, which have not been of personal help to me but are welcome and important for they are in an area nobody else is touching, you, Hoch, and less frequently now Dick, who? Most help to mehas been theft from me or defamation. It has never been otherwise. Gotta try that call now. Again thanks, and don't worry. Best,